

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 1

THE WASHINGTON POST
20 April 1981

Assault on Terrorism: Intelligence or Witch Hunt?

First of two articles

By George Lardner Jr.

Washington Post Staff Writer

Ever since it started issuing annual reports on the touchy topic of terrorism, the Central Intelligence Agency had never counted more than 188 terrorist attacks in a year throughout the world.

This year it has hit upon a startling new math. The CIA has suddenly discovered there were 760 international terrorist incidents in 1980 alone — and thousands of others in years gone by that it never bothered listing. Until now.

The escalation of the terrorist threat is just one facet of a new politics of paranoia sweeping Washington. Congressional investigations are being cranked up. Protests in the name of civil liberties are planned. Conservatives warn of dangers to national security. Liberals envision a new wave of "witch hunts."

At the CIA, the statistical revisionism coincides with the advent of the Reagan administration and its determination — proclaimed by Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr. — to make international terrorism the chief concern of foreign policy.

On Capitol Hill, the first forum will be the newly created Senate subcommittee on security and terrorism. The chairman of the five-member panel is Sen. Jeremiah Denton (R-Ala.), who plans to begin hearings soon on "Soviet and surrogate support for international terrorism," an issue that foreign policy hardliners feel has been shamefully neglected in recent years.

The CIA report should add fresh dimensions to the problem. Officials say the text has somehow become "stuck" somewhere at agency headquarters, but it should be made public shortly.

When it does come out, officials say, it will contain charts and graphs showing 5,954 terrorist attacks throughout the world between 1968 and 1979. Last year's report showed 3,336 attacks — for the same 12-year period. The new report also will show hundreds

more deaths and injuries at the hands of terrorists than the CIA has ever before suggested.

"They've thrown in things they didn't use to throw in," a State Department expert said approvingly. "Instead of using a standard of 'significant' terrorist activity, they're using more universal criteria. We encouraged them to do it."

Some critics see the new Senate subcommittee as a reincarnation of the old internal security subcommittee that used to hold extensive hearings on "subversive activities" and "subversion in government."

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.), who served on the old subcommittee before it was eliminated in 1977, seems to share that view, and not with dismay.

"I have felt for some time that it should be reinstituted and when I became chairman, I did reinstitute it," he says. "It's not going to be a witch hunt. It's not going to assassinate people's characters. It's just going to get the facts."

Denton voices similar assurances, although terrorism is far from his only field of interest. A retired admiral who spent seven years and seven months

as a prisoner of war in North Vietnam, Denton also intends to look at the performance of the American press on some sensitive subjects.

He says he can still remember how galling it was to be told by his captors that the U.S. press or politicians were taking up the same themes he'd heard days earlier from Radio Moscow or Radio Hanoi.

"I don't believe it's a matter of con-

cerning a propaganda campaign, employing the same placards and the same slogans around the world.

Back in the 1950s, Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy (R-Wis.) and his allies used to denounce such phenomena as evidence of a so-called "transmission belt" between Soviet Russia and sympathizers in the United States. Now it has an even more ominous set of labels. It is "disinformation," planted and nurtured by "agents of influence."

Among his first witnesses, Denton said in an interview, will be such people as Claire Sterling, author of *The Terror Network*, and Arnaud de Borchgrave, co-author of *The Spike*.

Both books are rave items in conservative circles, fueling the new alarms about the threat of terrorism and other insidious influences. Sterling's book lays out a pattern perhaps best summed up by the announced subject of Denton's first set of hearings: "Soviet and surrogate support for international terrorism." De Borchgrave's novel is about a Kremlin "blueprint" for taking over the West with the help of KGB dupes and agents of influence in academia, the press and even the White House.

"If we used the classic witnesses, from the intelligence agencies, I think they'd be looked on as representing vested interests, as not as objective as they should be," says the Senate subcommittee's chief counsel, Joel S. Lisker, a veteran of the FBI and the Justice Department's internal security section. He said journalists such as Sterling and de Borchgrave "will be taken into account" and "bring a